

# RECLAIMING OUR Journey



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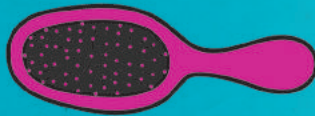
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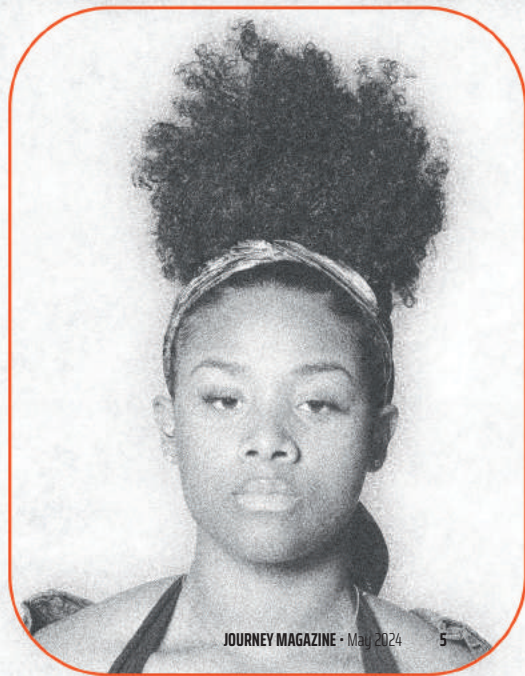


# RECLAIMING OUR KNOWLEDGE





# HAIR CARE: IT'S HIS STORY







# CULTIVATING BLACKHAIR

EMPOWERMENT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

By Kelsey Knox

**W**akati is a small but mighty black hair care brand that empowers its community through natural hair products, beauty, and community outreach. With their patented natural hair formula, Wakati stands as a beacon of hope for black hair care.

## Early Beginnings

In 2013, a group of passionate innovators within the Kao USA Research & Development team pulled together a dedicated team to create Wakati.

Their mission was to address the lack of effective hair care formulas designed for black hair.

It took the team 5-7 years to perfect their patent natural hair formula. This technology-based formula is infused with a unique blend of ingredients that are targeted to be activated by water. It addresses the needs of

kinky, curly and coily textures by making wash day much smoother. It softens coarse hair, reduces shedding and makes finger detangling a breeze. Senior brand manager Jennifer Patterson can attest to this phenomenon.

About 5 years ago, Patterson expressed how she had a set of knotless braids that had been in her hair for a very long time. After she finally took them out, her hair was completely matted.

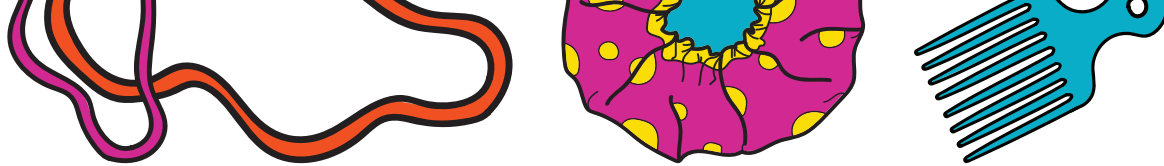
“I remember calling my husband with frustration, saying how I was about to cut my hair off,” said Patterson. However, it wasn’t until Patterson tried Wakati products for the first time that her perspective changed. “I was able to finger detangle my hair and was excited to help people learn about Wakati’s products,” said Patterson.

## Florida A&M University

Patterson described how the team’s refinement of the formula led to a collaboration with FAMU.

“This is FAMU’s baby, it was developed with case studies that we did with the school of business. They worked on the packaging, the messaging, there is a lot of FAMU equity and heritage in this brand,” said Patterson. Wakati has been in partnership with FAMU for almost 5 years by hosting case study competitions, giving out scholarships, and having on-campus activities.





“One of the things that I’m really proud of is that we’ve been working with FAMU students, hiring interns, and they have been an amazing asset to the organization,” said Patterson.

India Gay, a senior public relations scholar and brand management intern, enjoys being able to apply what she has learned as a business owner to her work and “vice versa,” said Gay.

Wakati plans to expand internships beyond marketing and business and encourages students to actively get involved by reaching out.

### **Patterson’s Role**

As a FAMU alumna graduate of the School of Business and Industry, Patterson takes pride in being the senior brand manager. Wakati’s products are what fueled Patterson to become a part of the team. “What I am most passionate about is talking directly to people who look like me, with hair like me. I’ve never had that opportunity to work on a brand that is directly targeted to black consumers,” said Patterson.

Patterson’s role is vital in maintaining the identity, perception, and success of the brand. “I create the strategies, what do we want to accomplish? And how are we taking steps to accomplish those goals,” said Patterson. She envisions the brand being expanded within the next couple of years.

“2024 is a pivotal year for us. We’ve learned a ton and we really feel confident that we have a better understanding of where we want to take the brand and for us that’s expanding the HBCU partnerships,” said Patterson.

Wakati’s mission is to build a pipeline where other HBCU students can get involved and gain real work experience within the company.

### **Kenya’s Role**

Kenya Foy, the assistant brand manager, started with the company 4 years ago and never looked back. “When I heard about a company launching something new and from scratch, I was like oh yeah I have to get on that. I love the beauty industry, I love black hair care, and I want to do something new and different with it,” said Foy.

Foy executes her mission by working with every department within the company, putting ideas and tasks into place. What excites her the most is Wakati’s growth potential.

“I think that the possibilities are endless for what we can do as far as our impact in the products that we create, and also our impact with the people who we touch,” said Foy. “In the next 5-10 years, I want Wakati to be everywhere. I want Wakati to be on every shelf, and I want people to know the hard work and impact that went into it.

Wakati continues to serve, empower, and uplift their community through their hard work of service.





# RECLAIMING OUR INFLUENCE







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# Black Hair: The Endless Journey

By Ashton Johnson

**A** head of hair is the crown that sits on top of powerful, intelligent black minds. The history of Black hair has pushed a sense of creativity, identity and individuality that influences everyone.

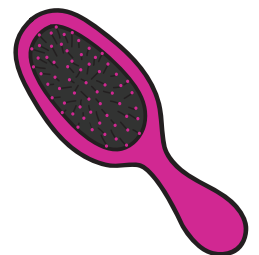
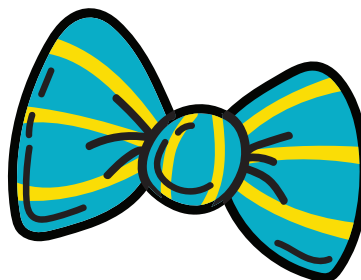
Crystal Moulton, who rocks a beautiful ginger-like fro, says that hair adds to our individual style. “It makes me feel great and free, especially when I get compliments on it,” the second-year agribusiness student explained her love for her hair.

Locs, curls, braids and wigs have all been a part of the journey of what Black hair is today. Each era has brought trends, innovations and challenges, shaping how black individuals express themselves through their hair.

## In the Beginning

The idea that hair connects to someone’s identity dates all the way back to pre-African civilizations, according to CBC Radio. During slavery, the dignity of the Africans was often taken to gain control. However, we continued using our hair as a symbol of cultural heritage and a survival tool.

Braids were used as a form of communication and storytelling by mapping out escape routes and sending messages to other enslaved people. Despite these attempts to erase their heritage, the enslaved Africans found ways to claim their identity through their hair, and that is still prominent throughout Black culture today.





## 1900 - 1910

The first significant era of hair was an eye-opening time for many Black women. With little to no salons for women of color, hair pioneers Madame C.J. Walker and Annie Turnbo Malone developed products for Black hair. Annie Malone's first footsteps in the world of hair led to the Wonderful Hair Grower by Madame C.J. Walker, who eventually went on to make a million-dollar brand and open salons. From there, Garret Morgan invented the relaxer, and the women began straightening their hair.

## 1920s - 1930s

The next era brought in the roaring 20s, when hair was just as fun as the name of the time period. Finger waves, short blunt bobs and pin curls pushed the boundaries of the everyday hairstyles everyone was once used to.

## 1940s - 1950s

Through the 40s, women still wore curls in their hair, but the 1950 invention of weave elevated the game just a little more. As Hollywood glamour swept the nation, black hairstyles took on a more polished and elegant look. Styles like the chignon, croquignole curl, Victory Rolls and wavy hair were also very popular during this time.

## 1960s - 1970s

The 60s and 70s marked when the once-highlighted European-influenced hairstyles were replaced with the pride of the Afro. The 1960s sparked a cultural revolution, and black individuals embraced their natural hair texture like never before. The Afro represented a symbol of empowerment, pride and rebellion against social standards.





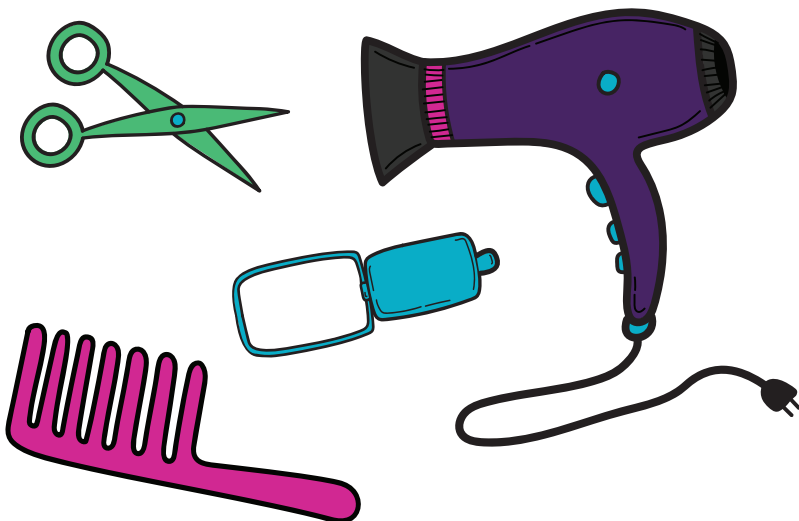
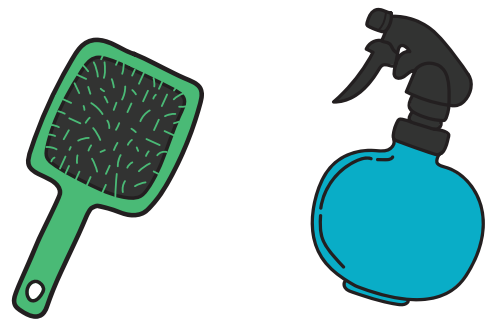


## 1980s - 1990s

The Jheri curl took over the Black community when Comer Cottrell made the Curly Kit in the 80s. The bigger the hair and the more asymmetrical the cut, the better the style, was the motto of those days. By the time the 90s came around, hip-hop culture and Black Hollywood influenced the trends of the high-top fade and box braids like Janet Jackson.

## 2000s - Present

From shortcuts and sew-ins to micro braids, the early 2000s defined self-expression with a wide range of different looks. Few people had relaxers as a result of people wearing more wigs and protective styles. Soon, society normalized wearing natural hair and locs. The growing movement of celebrating all-natural fros, silk presses, wigs and braids has amplified Black voices over the last couple of years.



“As a race we are becoming more accepting of natural hair and locs a lot because of social media,” graphic design student and loc stylist Zaria Salter said. “Our generation is, either way, the natural the better, or a full face of makeup, we’re becoming more accepting.”

Black hair has inspired and captivated people for years. With every turn in its development, it will continue to do so as a potent sign of individuality and belonging.









**Journey**

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